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ABSTRACT

Developed for a high school quinmester unit on nonfiction, this guide provides the teacher with teaching strategies for an introduction to nonfiction as a form of writing dealing with truth, facts, and ideas. Various classifications of nonfiction are investigated, including the biography, the essay, and true tales of great adventure, with required readings on each. The range of content covers various types of nonfiction, unique qualities of nonfiction, and writing examples of nonfiction. The course is developed so that it concerns itself more with personal values of reading and writing nonfiction than with the formal listing of conventions and terminology. The guide is arranged according to performance objectives with suggested teaching strategies listed under each objective. A list of student and teacher resources (state-adopted textbooks, reference books, and films) is provided. (HOD)

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CS

AUTHORIZED COURSE OF INSTRUCTION FOR THE QUINMESTER PROGRAM

DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

LANGUAGE ARTS

An Introduction to Nonfiction

5114.55
5115.55
5116.55

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Language Arts

Written
for the
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Dade County Public Schools
Miami, Florida
1972

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COURSE NUMBER

5114.55
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COURSE TITLE: AN INTRODUCTION TO NONFICTION

COURSE DESCRIPTION: An introduction to nonfiction as a form of writing dealing with truth, facts and ideas. Various classifications of nonfiction will be investigated including the biography (fictionalized biography, the biographical sketch and the autobiography), the essay (formal and informal), and true tales of great adventure with required readings in each.

I. PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES

A. Through wide reading students will experience the types of nonfiction.

B. Having experienced the various types of nonfiction, students will discover the unique qualities of nonfiction.

C. Having read and discussed widely ranging selections of nonfiction, students will write original examples which conform to the appropriate conventions.

II. COURSE CONTENT

A. Rationale

In the complex world of the second half of the 20th century, a reader needs as never before to test his notions of self, truth, reality, and personal relationships against those of someone else without risk. Perhaps this is one reason for the increasing popularity of works of nonfiction among students.

This course concerns itself more with personal values of reading and writing nonfiction than with the formal listing of conventions and terminology. Other quin courses which might be useful as resources are Comparative Biography and Nonfiction: The Newspaper, Periodicals and Biography.

B. Range of content

1. Various types of nonfiction

2. Unique qualities of nonfiction

3. Writing examples of nonfiction

NOTE: Unlike most quin courses, this one is organized so that students may accomplish all three objectives in relation to first one, then another of the types of nonfiction. Although many readings are suggested, teachers can find ample material to support this quin in state-adopted literature textbooks.

III. TEACHING STRATEGIES

A. Biographies including fictionalized biography, biographical sketches, and autobiography.

1. Show the film Literature Appreciation: How to Read Biographies (1-13783).

2. Have students read Samuel Johnson's "Letter to Lord Chesterfield," his essays "Modern Fiction" and "Books," and excerpts from Boswell's The Life of Samuel Johnson. (These selections appear in many state-adopted texts including The English Tradition: Nonfiction.) Have them discuss Johnson as they "see" him through his own works and as he is portrayed by Boswell.

3. Assign interested students to read The Diary of Anne Frank. Have them compare the diary with the dramatization which can be found in Counterpoints in Literature and Encounters: Themes in Literature.

4. Ask another group to read William Gibson's The Miracle Worker in Insights: Themes in Literature and compare it with selections by Helen Keller such as "How I Learned to See," (Insights), "Three Days to See," (Adventures in Appreciation), and "The Great Day," (Outlooks).

5. Have students read biographical sketches and excerpts of life stories of people who interest them. After they have read, have them prepare a brief dramatic situation in which they role-play the subject of the biography. Selections from state-adopted texts include:

"Lou Gehrig: An American Hero" by Paul Gallico in Insights and Exploring Literature

"Walter Reed and the Conquest of Yellow Fever" by Paul de Kruif in Exploring Literature

"The Family Trade" by Cornelia Otis Skinner in Adventures in American Literature

"Opening Night on Broadway" by Moss Hart in Designs in Nonfiction

"I Resolve to Become a Jungle Doctor" by Albert Schweitzer in Western Literature: Themes and Writers

6. In order to encourage divergent thinking, present a variety of "biographies", and have students label them biography or nonbiography and defend their reasoning.

   a. Life with Father
   b. Cheaper by the Dozen
   c. Auntie Mame
   d. In Cold Blood (a nonfiction novel)
   e. The Biography of the Motion Picture Camera (a rental film)
   f. Time-Life Series (historical periods)
   g. Little Women
   h. The Flowering of New England
   i. "O Captain! My Captain"
   j. "Mary White" (essay by E. B. White)

7. Assign students to read a work by an author such as André Maurois, Emil Ludwig, Irving Stone, Taylor Caldwell, and Arthur Miller who have dramatized and fictionalized the lives of men and women. Have them report on their reading addressing themselves to questions like these:

   a. Do such authors capitalize on idiosyncrasies of their subjects?
   b. Are events in the subjects' lives or their achievements highlighted?

8. Have students informally outline what they would include in an autobiography. Where would they begin? What would they emphasize? Who would be the "main characters"? How important would events be? Would there be a moment of decision? How much of a life story can a young person tell?

9. Have students read biographical sketches such as the New Yorker "Profiles" or the "Most Unforgettable Person" feature in Reader's Digest. After they have analyzed and discussed these sketches, ask them to write a biographical sketch consciously modeled after one of these styles.

B. The essay (formal and informal)

1. Have students look up the etymology of the following words:

   a. Essay
   b. Rhetoric
   c. Persuasion

d. Formal
e. Informal

Have them hypothesize how these terms relate to the essay as a genre different from stories, plays, and poems.

2. Hand out dittoed copies of the following quotations. Ask students to read them silently jotting down whatever notes or reactions occur to them. Have a class discussion about both the quotations and the students' comments. Students should keep this handout for future reference.

> I am mistaken if there are many others who offer their readers a matter more fertile in reflections, and if any writer has scattered more material, whether good or bad, or at least has scattered it as thickly, on his paper.
>
> -Montaigne

> I do now publish my Essays; which of all my other works, have been most current; for that, as it seems, they come home to Men's business and bosoms.
>
> -Bacon

> When I make my choice of a subject that has not been treated by others, I throw together my reflections on it without any order or method, so that they may appear rather in the looseness and freedom of the essay, than in the regularity of a set discourse.
>
> -Addison

> The Essays want no Preface: they are all Preface. A preface is nothing but a talk with the reader; and they do nothing else.
>
> -Lamb

> ...Montaigne, from whom indeed, in a great measure, all those tentative writers, or essayists, derive.
>
> -Pater

3. Have students view the film Literature Appreciation: How to Read Essays (1-11794).

4. Have students read several essays by the following representative writers to detect differences in tone, style, and purpose.

   a. Sir Francis Bacon
   b. Ralph Waldo Emerson
   c. Henry David Thoreau
   d. Alfred North Whitehead
   e. Matthew Arnold
   f. John Henry Newman

   Students may conclude that the foregoing authors wrote essays serious in tone, direct, and logical.

   a. J. B. Priestley
   b. Charles Lamb
   c. James Thurber
   d. Max Beerbohm
   e. George Orwell ("Shooting an Elephant")
   f. Joseph Addison ("A Young Lady's Diary")
   g. Juan Ramon Jimenez

   Students may conclude that writers in the second group compose essays personal in tone and appealing to feelings rather than intellect.

5. Have students read several essays on the same topic. Have them observe that how the author writes and how he feels affect what is said.

   a. Dreams

      J. B. Priestley, "Dreams"
      Charles Lamb, "Dream Children"
      Martin Luther King, Jr., "I Have a Dream"

   b. Family

      Francis Bacon, "Of Parents and Children"
      J. B. Priestley, "No School Report"
      Charles Dickens, "The Poor Relation's Family"

   c. Nostalgia and reminiscence

      E. B. White, "Once More to the Lake"
      J. B. Priestley, "Waking to Smell Bacon, etc."
      Charles Lamb, "My First Play"
      Robert Louis Stevenson, "Child's Play"

d. People

Lytton Strachey, "James Boswell"
C. P. Snow, "Winston Churchill"
Kelly Miller, "Frederick Douglass"

e. Places

LeRoi Jones, "Cold, Hurt, and Sorrow" (Streets of Despair)
Thomas Macaulay, "London Coffeehouses"
Elizabeth Bowen, "London, 1940"

6. Have students write a brief essay on each of the topics in Teaching Strategy #5.

7. Have students discover the essay as one of the strongest voices of social protest.

Jonathan Swift, "A Modest Proposal"
Henry David Thoreau, "Civil Disobedience"
Thomas Paine, "Common Sense"
William Makepeace Thackeray, "The Influence of the Aristocracy on Snobs"
Daniel Defoe, "Instability of Human Glory"
Eldridge Cleaver, "The White Race and Its Heroes"

8. Have students choose some current issue such as poverty, war, social injustice, the establishment, ecology, and develop an essay of protest.

9. Have students review the definitions of the essay examined earlier (Teaching Strategy B-2). Have them use one of these definitions as the thesis statement for writing "An Essais on Essays." They should draw heavily upon their reading for supportive evidence.

C. True tales of great adventure

1. Have students, after many kinds of experience, define great adventure.

a. Have students view films such as Sky Capers (1-14272), Ski the Outer Limits (1-30929), Psychedelic Wet (1-00193), or Catch the Joy (1-14288).
b. Have students read or listen to Robert P. Tristram Coffin's "Crystal Moment" (Currents in Poetry).
c. Show students the film Dream of Wild Horses (1-04676) or End of One (1-05915).

d. Have students view the film Begone Dull Care (1-04386).
e. Have students read or listen to John Keats' "On First Looking Into Chapman's Homer."
f. Assign students to read "Just Short of Eternity," Victor Heiser's eye witness account of the Johnstown flood (Currents in Nonfiction).
g. Have students read Emily Dickinson's "There Is No Frigate like a Book."
h. Have students view TV programs such as the National Geographic Series or You Are There.

After several such activities, poll students to determine how many liked all of the experiences; which ones were favored or rejected. Ask students to suggest types of people to whom each of the foregoing experiences might have been an adventure.

2. Ask each student to imagine what would be the greatest adventure he could have. If students are willing, they may share their "dream adventures" with the class.

3. Pose to students the question: What is there in man's nature that forces him beyond the known?

4. Have students conduct a poll asking people:

   a. Where were you when the first man stepped on the moon?
   b. Who said, "One small step for man, a giant step for mankind"?
   c. How many additional moon shots have you followed?
   d. How many have there been?
   e. Would you stay up all night to watch a landing on Mars?

   Have students generalize as to the significance of the answers obtained.

5. Have students brainstorm why in their opinion men and women seek new horizons. Two quotations which might stimulate discussion are Mallory's statement, "Because it's there," and Amelia Earhart's, "Because I want to."

6. Have students read accounts by adventurers such as:

   a. Thor Heyerdahl
   b. Jacques-Yves Cousteau

c. Robert Scott
d. Mathew Henson
e. George Leigh Mallory
f. Sir Edmund Hillary

7. Have students explore the thoughts of writers who extended the frontiers of the mind.

a. Albert Einstein
b. Joseph B. Rhine
c. Sigmund Freud
d. Carl G. Jung
e. Alfred Adler
f. Norbert Weiner
g. W. E. B. DuBois
h. Edward Teller

8. Have students look up the etymology of crusade. Have them investigate some persons who have initiated modern crusades and discover what causes they espoused.

a. Rachel Carson
b. Ralph Nader
c. Margaret Sanger
d. Upton Sinclair
e. Martin Luther King, Jr.
f. Carrie Nation
g. Gloria Steinem
h. General Billy Mitchell
i. Susan B. Anthony
j. Jane Addams

9. Have students trace the route of some of the famous journeys of exploration and have them hypothesize the motivation and adventures of these wanderers.

a. Odysseus
b. St. Paul
c. Marco Polo
d. Leif Erikson
e. Christopher Columbus
f. Nelly Bly
g. Charles Lindbergh
h. Thor Heyerdahl

10. Have interested students search old as well as current newspapers and magazines to find accounts of lone voyagers.

11. Have students select one of the following as a topic to research and to report to the class in any medium (media) desired.

a. The Lost Continent of Atlantis: Plato to Today
b. The Devil's Triangle--Truth Is Stranger than Fiction
c. The Ups and Downs of the Illustrious Piccards
d. Pole Vaulters: North, South, and Third (The Himalayas)
e. The Legend of Amelia Earhart
f. Albert Schweitzer: "Jack of All Trades"
g. Gentle Rebel: Elizabeth Barrett Browning
h. The Court Martial of General Billy Mitchell
i. Dig for the Past
   (1) Thor Heyerdahl's theories
   (2) The Dead Sea Scrolls
   (3) The Viking Stone
   (4) The Rosetta Stone
j. Terry Jo Dupperault and the yacht Bluebell
k. Murder in Public: The Killing of Harvey Lee Oswald
l. The Search for Noah's Ark
m. Spelunkers, Potholers, and Speleologists
n. Dr. Frederick Cook: Hero or Liar
o. Project Mohole
p. Tarnished Heroes: Benedict Arnold, Ira Hayes, Jim Thorpe, Aaron Burr, Dr. Mudd
q. Lucky Lindy
r. Sports Heroes: Jackie Robinson, Joe Louis
s. Diamond Jim Brady: Gourmet or Gourmand

12. Have students synthesize the unique qualities of nonfiction: true facts about real people.

IV. STUDENT AND TEACHER RESOURCES

A. State-adopted textbooks

English Tradition: Nonfiction
Counterpoints in Literature
Encounters: Themes in Literature
Insights: Themes in Literature
Exploring Literature
Adventures in American Literature
Designs in Nonfiction
Western Literature: Themes and Writers
Currents in Poetry
Currents in Nonfiction
Major Writers of America
Major British Writers

B. Reference books

Alcott, Louisa M. Little Women. New York: Airmont, n.d.

Brooks, Van Wyck. New England Reader. New York: Atheneum, 1962.

Capote, Truman. In Cold Blood. New York: Random House, 1966.

Day, Clarence. Life with Father. New York: Washington Square Press, n.d.

Dennis, Patrick. Auntie Mame. New York: Vanguard, 1954.

Frank, Anne. Anne Frank: Diary of a Young Girl. New York: Washington Square Press, n.d.

Gibson, William. The Miracle Worker. New York: Bantam, 1962.

Gilbreth, Frank and Ernestine G. Carey. Cheaper by the Dozen. New York: Crowell, 1963.

Peterson, Houston, ed. Great Essays. New York: Washington Square Press, 1966.

Turner, Darwin, ed. Black American Literature Essays. Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, 1969.

C. Films

Literature Appreciation: How to Read Biographies 1-13783

Literature Appreciation: How to Read Essays	1-11794
Sky Capers	1-14272
Ski the Outer Limits	1-30929
Psychedelic Wet	1-00193
Catch the Joy	1-14288
Dream of the Wild Horses	1-04676
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